SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Sir, I would request the Prime Minister to say that the power plants are safe. Let if be discussed by Parliament, by the Party leaders. I do not think there is anything wrong in it. Let us go into the points raised by the independent Regulatory Board.

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE: Sir, this is a suggestion for action, and the Government will consider it seriously.

National Highways in Assam

* 42. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken by his Ministry to repair and improve the National Highways of Assam which are badly damaged by flood and for other reasons;

(b) whether any amount has been released to Assam Government for this purpose; and

(c) if so, whether the utilisation has started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI): (a) Improvement of National Highways in Assam is done by three agencies, viz. the Assam PWD, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). During the last 4 years, in order to improve the conditions of the National Highways in the State, the allocations and expenditure are as follows:—

(Rs. in crore)

Year	Allocation	Expenditure
1999-2000	99.16	77.47
2000-2001	136.26	116.81
2001-2002	158.73	157.33
2002-2003	132.74	60.64*

(b) and (c) Allocations and expenditure incurred for the improvement of National Highways by Assam PWD in the last 4 years are as follows:—

(Rs. in crore)

Year	Allocation	Expenditure
1999-2000	76.06	54.37
2000-2001	98.72	79.27
2001-2002	114.99	113.59
2002-2003	82.76	29.91

*(a) Indicates figures upto October, 2002.

(b) Direct Payment System was introduced during 2000-2001

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Sir, the hon. Minister has given a reply. My question was: Whether action has been taken by his Ministry to repair and improve the National Highways of Assam, which are badly damaged by floods and due to other reasons? Sir, NH No. 31 connects Guwahati with the rest of the country through Barhi of Bihar. It is a lifeline to the whole of North-Eastern region. But its condition in Assam is so deplorable that you cannot use this Highway properly. And, like National Highway No. 31, National Highway No. 37, which connects the other parts of Assam, is also in a very bad condition. So, I want to know from the Minister whether he will take appropriate action to improve this lifeline. Till now, the condition of both these Highways is so deplorable that they cannot be used properly. So, what action is being taken?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, in my reply, I had given some information, intentionally, to indicate the amount of money that is given to the maintenance agencies. The National highways are maintained, basically, through the State PWDs, but, in certain cases, we utilise the services of the Border Roads Organisation also. Therefore, in that reply, I has specifically indicated the amount of money that was given during the last few years in order to indicate the type of efforts the Centre is making in order to improve and maintain roads.

The hon. Member has now specifically asked a question about the two roads. The total length of NH 31, in Assam, is 309 kilometres, the Assam PWD has been maintaining only 147 kilometres. In fact, it was earlier maintaining the total length of the road. As soon as work on the East-West Corridor started, we have handed over 162 kilometres of this road to the National Highways Authority of India, as it is a part of the

East-West Corridor. Even today, this total length of the road is being maintained by the State PWD, beacuse the NHAI has asked the State PWD to maintain it, till it starts working on it. Probably, next week, the NHAI will give them Rs. 22 crores for maintaining the 162 kilometres of the road, which is now under the NHAI.

In regard to the balance 147 kilometres of NH 31, there are two problematic stretches. One is from km. 858 to km. 898 and another is from km. 901 to km. 918. These stretches affect the movement of traffic on the highway. Part of it is being tackled now, and the balance will be tackled by the State PWD in the next two financial years as per their recommendations. Therefore, as the work on this road starts, there will be a lot of improvement in the condition of the road.

Similarly, in regard to NH 37, its length in Assam is 689 kilometres. A length of 561 kilometres is being maintained by the State PWD, and a stretch of 128 kilometres of the road, which forms part of the East- West Corridor, is with the National Highways Authority of India.The problematic stretches in this road are basically km. 475 to km. 480. Certain portions on the Mudoijan river get submerged. This problem is being tackled. Thirty kilometres length of this stretch is scheduled to be improved during the year 2003-04, and the balance will be taken up in the subsequent year. As I told the House, an additional amount of Rs. 22 crores has been given by the National Highways Authority of India to improve this road. I hope, by the end of this financial year there, will be a substantial improvement on these two stretches.

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Sir, NH 52 connects the whole of the Northern Bramhaputra Valley and Arunachal Pradesh with the rest of the country, through NH 31 .The Border Roads Organisation has been given the work to improve this highway. This highway is in a very bad shape. In the Dhamaji District of Assam, the Highway has been badly damaged by floods. Till now, no improvement has been made. Moreover, some parties have been looting the persons driving or walking through a bridge on this road, as the road is damaged by last year's floods. Will the hon. Minister enquire into the matter and do something to improve the connectivity of Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Bramhaputra Valley with the rest of the country?

Sir, the hon. Minister.has said that the East-West Corrider goes directly up to Silchar. Actually, it goes further up to Ledo and then further to Burma up to Stilwell Road. This road goes up fo Burma. Why should this corridor not be up to that place. I would like to have the reply of the hon. Minister on this point also.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, it is true, as the hon. Member has said, that NH 52 has been handed over to the Border Roads Organisation. It was handed over just a few months back. All these years, the NH 52 was being maintained by the State PWD. Since the condition of the road is very bad and the State PWD was not able to maintain it all these years, we discussed this point with the State Government.... I, discussed it with the previous and the present Chief Minister and requested them that the Border Roads Organisation may be in a better position to take it up. Therefore, this road has been handed over during this monsoon. But a part of it is still with the State PWD. I am aware that this road is the main communication line not only to Assam, but even to the other North-Eastern States. Therefore, recently, I had gone to Guwahati and had a detailed discussion with the State PWD Minister and also with the hon^Governor. We have now evolved a system. BRO has been given money as well as directions that this road has to be .made fit for normal traffic by 31st March. There is a complaint that you cannot drive beyond 20 to 25 kilometres per hour on this road because there are so many pot-holes. This road will be fit for normal traffic by 31st March, 2003. There will be no potholes, there will be no undue obstacles on this road by 31st March, 2003. But there js the problem of big bridges. There are problem of floods every year, during every monsoon. The roads are blocked; the rivers change their course. So, there is this plan to tame the rivers, in consultation with the State Government. This is being looked into, and this road will be reasonably will repaired by 31st March. Sir, one more question he had asked about the East-West Corridor. So far as the East-West Corridor is concerned, this alignment was decided when the Hon'ble Prime Minister gave to the Nation this massive programme of National Highway Development Project at a cost of Rs. 54,000 crores. At that time, the Committee had decided the alignment, which, as you know, starts from Silchar, goes northward and then goes westward. This alignment, at the moment, cannot be changed. But once we complete the ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please address the Chair, not Members.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sorry, Sir. My apologies, Sir. As I said, this alignment was finalised earlier and it would not be possible to change it, but, later on, it may be considered.

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Every year Assam, has to face serious and devastating floods, and this damages all the roads in the State. Now, the Hon'ble Minister has given a reply, which is of a general nature. I want to know from the Hon'ble Minister whether the Government has taken any special care with regard to Assam because due to rainfall and floods, bridges and roads in Assam are washed away every year. So, I would like to know whether special measures have been taken by the Government for strengthening roads in Assam and other parts of the North-Eastern Region of the country. There are some other important problems, Assam being a strategic border State. The communication system should be improved. It is essential for the safety and security of the country also. So, I want to know from the Hon'ble Minister whether special measures have been taken to protect the National Highways and other roads in Assam from rainfall and floods.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, we are aware of the damages caused to roads and the National Highways in the North-East, particularly, in the State of Assam by the rainfall and floods. We have to tackle this problem by taking a macro view of this, because it involves not only the road portion; irrigation is involved and various other bodies are involved. The Central Water Commission is involved. Therefore, on 21st August, 2002 my Ministry set up a Committee consisting of the Chief Engineer of my Ministry, official from the Border Roads Organisation, Chief Engineer, PWD, Chief Engineer, Irrigation Department, Superintending Engineer of my Ministry, to go into this total problem, how to tackle the problem of damages caused by floods. Apart from this, all the North-Eastern States have been asked to set up at their level a committee to go into this problem. This committee consists of representatives of the Central Water Commission, apart from representatives of other bodies. Therefore, the totality of flood damages in the country is being looked into, at the macro level, and once this committee gives its recommendations, various measures will be taken at the higher level; and we would be able to take care of it.

SHRI URKHNO GWRA BRAHMA: Sir, apart from the routine work of repairing of roads and National Highways, there is a necessity for permanent policy to counter the floods and heavy rainfall in Assam, particularly, the maintenance of National Highway Nos. 31 and 37. There is a recurrence of floods every year, and floods are the major reason for the present state of the National Highways. It seems that the present measures to improve and maintain the National Highways are not sufficient enough. Alongwith the maintenance of roads and National Highways, there should be a joint action by the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Road Transport and the National Highways to counter the flood problem. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any policy has been framed in consultation with the Ministry of Water Resources to take special measures to counter the present problem.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, I just tried to cover that earlier. Apart from the road repairs which we carry out, we want to take a total view in which all the agencies will be involved, as I just replied earlier, and once the Committee gives its recommendations, we will be able to take care of these things.

SHRI RISHANG KEISHING: Sir, the question, which was put by my hon. colleague, pertains to Assam only. Assam is only one of the seven sister States of the North-East. The National Highways covering the North-East, are in a deplorable condition, National Highway No. 39, National Highway No. 53 and National Highway No. 150 in Manipur are in deplorable conditions. They are not at all motorable. Maintenance is very poor, and in fact, maintenance is not done on the plea that the insurgents are obstructing it. Sir, what special measures will be taken by the Government to see that this most incommunicable region of the country is connected with good and motorable roads and what special efforts will be made in order to see that the work of road maintenance by the BRTF and other agencies is safe also?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, although the question relates only to Assam, I will give some general information on this. We are not at all neglecting the North-East region as far as roads are concerned. All efforts are being made. In fact, I have spent five days in the North-East visiting all the States, discussing this issue with all the

Chief Ministers, the P.W.D Ministers, only about ten days back, and in case of other States in the North-East, we are taking similar action, as is being taken in respect of Assam. Now, there are certain problems. One of the problems about which the hon. Member made a reference, is the problem of law and order.This problem has been discussed at the highest level, and now, we are trying to work out if the security arrangements can be built into the plan and the funds that we make available for repairs. Sir, apart from that, there is a problem of the contracting agencies in the North—East. The contracting agencies have not been fully developed. There are no equipments. We are making efforts to develop these things also. I have discussed this thing with all the Chief Ministers and the P.W.D. Ministers that we should develop that. So far as the question of funding is-concerned, funding is not a problem for the North-East. The only problem is the agencies to implement these programmes and quality of work. That is the main problem.

SHRI ROBERT KHARSHING: Sir, I wish to raise a point which is not directly connected to roads, but has an indirect connection with it. I come from Meghalya, and we have to travel through Assam. Now, all over the North-East, in the P.W.D. Department, we get a lot of funds from the Centre. But, the problem is, we all hide them under the carpet, leading to various scams. Now, all over North-East, the contractors go towards the P.W.D, department expecting that they will get a particular road or a particular chunk of a road, and in every State, including mine, I am ashamed to say that now the P.W.D, department has become the centre of all Scams. The Government of India gives us money. In the Western States, if a road is not built for fifty years, that contractor is blacklisted. In our country, the position is that the road is built just for a few months, and by monsoon, it is gone. I would like to know whether the Central Government, besides giving funds, will also link up this factor of quality, as has been mentioned by the Minister, instead of just giving funds.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, on this issue, apart from advising the States, once the work is given to the State P.W.D., the quality control is also supposed to be looked after by them. However, we do have regular interaction, and in this meeting which I have had with various Chief Ministers, the P.W.D. Ministers, the hon'ble

Governors and the Lt. Governors, I raised this issue, and we have been trying to improve the quality, as I said earlier, by bringing the proper contracting agencies. From my Ministry, as and when we get any complaint, we send the inspection team, and I would request all the hon. Members here that if something comes to their notice, they should bring the same to our notice as far as the National Highways are concerned, and we wili look into it. Beyond that, I think, we have to leave it to the States.

*43 [The questioner (Shri Yadlapati Venkat Rao) was absent. For answer vide pages 24 and 25 infra.]

जम्मू और कश्मीर में घुसपैठ पर अमरीका का दृष्टिकोण

*44. **प्रो. अलका क्षत्रिय**:

श्री बालकवि बैरागी:

क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या भारत स्थिति अमरीकी राजदूत ने इस बात को स्वीकार किया है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में पिछले दो-तीन महीनों में आतंकवादियों की घुसपैठ बढ़ी है तथा पाकिस्तान द्वारा जम्मू-कश्मीर विधानसभा चुनावों को दिखावा बताने के लिए उसे जमकर लताड़ लगाई है;

(ख) यदि हां, तोक्या पाकिस्तान द्वारा जारी घुसपैठ को प्रभावी ढंग से रोकने के लिए सरकार ने अमरीका से तुरन्त हस्तक्षेप करने की मांग की है; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है?

विदेश मंत्री (श्री यशवंत सिन्हा): (क) सरकार ने उन मीडिया रिपोर्टों को देखा है जिसमें भारत में संयुक्त राज्य के राजदूत द्वारा इन टिप्पणियों को देने की बात कही गई है। संयुक्त राज्य अधिकारियों ने पिछले दो-तीन महीनों के दौरान अनेक अवसरों पर पाकिस्तान से सीमा-पार घुसपैठ की हाल की प्रवृत्ति पर चिंता व्यक्त की है। संयुक्त राज्य सहित